

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9468

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 21059

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON DC PRESIDENT MORO

SUMMARY: I MET WITH DC PRESIDENT MORO FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF ON DEC. 22 TO MAKE CLEAR OUR CONCERN OVER THE DISQUIETING TREND OF EVENTS IN ITALY AND TO REITERATE OUR STRONG OPPOSITION TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. MORO SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR POSITION AND SHARED OUR PREOCCUPATIONS. HE DESCRIBED THE CURRENT SITUATION, HOWEVER, AS ONE OF "CRUEL SIMPLICITY" DUE TO THE LACK OF ALTERNATIVES. THE PCI, HE SAID, HAD DECIDED TO BRING DOWN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT (PROBABLY IN MID-JANUARY BY VOTING AGAINST THE BUDGET) IN ORDER TO OBTAIN SOME DEMONSTRABLE CHANGE. THE DC COULD RESPOND BY SEEKING EARLY ELECTIONS, BUT MORO BELIEVES SUCH A COURSE WOULD BE DANGEROUS, RESOLVE NOTHING, AND SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS A LAST RESORT. HE PREFERS A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WHICH WOULD SATISFY PCI MINIMAL DEMANDS BY BRINGING THE COMMUNISTS INTO THE GOVERNING MAJORITY (ALONG WITH THE PSI AND LIBERALS) OF A NEW COALITION TO BE COMPOSED OF THE DC, REPUBLICANS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. HE DESCRIBED SENTIMENT WITHIN THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS AS "WATCHFUL" AND "HOSTILE" TO ANY FURTHER CONCESSION. AS THE DC CANNOT RISK A "DISASTEROUS" SPLIT, MORO SAID THE FORMULA HE OUTLINED COULD NOT BE PROPOSED WITHOUT THE FULL SUPPORT

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OF THE PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE OUTSET, I TOLD MORO THAT I HAD COME BECAUSE I VALUED HIS COUNCIL AND INSIGHT. I WOULD BE LESS THAN FRANK IF I DID NOT TELL HIM OF OUR EXTREME CONCERN OVER THE APPARENT TREND TOWARD GREATER ACCOMMODATION OF THE PCI. IN RECOGNITION OF HIS KEY

ROLE IN DETERMINING HIS PARTY'S STRATEGY, I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY MY GOVERNMENT TO UNDERScore THIS CONCERN AND TO REITERATE OUR CLEAR OPPOSITION TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT AND OUR DESIRE THAT ITS INFLUENCE BE LIMITED TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.

2. MORO SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR POSITION AND INDEED SHARED OUR PREOCCUPATIONS. HE HAD HOPED THAT THE JULY PROGRAM ACCORD WOULD HAVE HELD THE SITUATION AT LEAST UNTIL THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AT THE END OF 1978. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THIS HAD ALSO BEEN THE HOPE OF PCI LEADER BERLINGUER. HOWEVER, THE PCI HAD COME UNDER INCREASING PRESSURES FROM ITS BASE, CULMINATING IN THE UNWANTED METALWORKERS MASS DEMONSTRATION ON DECEMBER 2 WHICH HAD INITIALLY BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES FOR WHICH THE PCI HAD PLEDGED SUPPORT. PCI AND CGIL LEADERS HAD SUCCEEDED IN MUTING THIS SEVERE CRITICISM OF THE PARTY'S SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT. BUT THE ISSUE, INFLUENCED BY THE CLIMATE PRODUCED BY LA MALFA'S RENEWED CALL FOR FULL PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, HAD CREATED STRONG DISSENT WITHIN THE PCI LEADERSHIP. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, MORO SAID THAT BERLINGUER HAD TAKEN A MORE CAUTIOUS POSITION IN CONTRAST TO HARD-LINERS LED BY CHAIROMONTE, PAJETTA AND THE LONGO GROUP. HE DID NOT THINK THE USSR HAD
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HAD ANY DIRECT INFLUENCE ON THE PCI "ULTIMATUM-LIKE" DECISION, WHICH IS NOW CLEARLY THAT OF PROVOKING A POLITICAL CRISIS BY WITHDRAWING ITS ABSTENTION SUPPORT FROM THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. HE WAS CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PCI'S DEMAND FOR AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT REPRESENTED AN INITIAL BARGAINING POSITION.

3. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DC REALISTICALLY HAD TO PREPARE ITSELF FOR A GOVERNMENT CRISIS. WHILE THE PARTY WOULD TRY TO HOLD THE LINE AGAINST ANY CHANGE IN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, MORO SAID THIS WAS NO LONGER REALLY POSSIBLE. THE DC ESSENTIALLY HAS TWO ALTERNATIVES: 1) IT COULD TRY TO NEGOTIATE AN AGREEMENT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS IN THE LEAST COSTLY MANNER POSSIBLE; 2) IT COULD ADOPT A HARD LINE AGAINST ANY FURTHER PCI ADVANCE, A POSITION WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. MORO PRACTICALLY RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF GOING INTO THE OPPOSITION. THIS WOULD BE A FATAL ERROR SINCE IT WOULD ENTRUST ITALIAN DEMOCRACY TO THE COMMUNISTS WITHOUT THE DC'S CONDITIONING WEIGHT. IT COULD ALSO EASILY LEAD TO A PERILOUS SITUATION

SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH EXISTED IN CHILE.

4. MORO DID NOT RULE OUT USE OF THE DC'S OPTION TO CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS, BUT HE DESCRIBED SUCH A COURSE AS "DANGEROUS" AND UNPRODUCTIVE. ELECTIONS WOULD BE TIME-CONSUMING, PARALYZING GOVERNMENT DECISIONMAKING FOR A TWO MONTH PERIOD IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY "TENSE" CLIMATE OF ECONOMIC DISLOCATION, TERRORISM AND DISORDER. THE DC WOULD PROBABLY DO WELL, POSSIBLY ATTAINING 40 OR 41 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. HOWEVER, HE EXPECTED THE PCI WOULD ALSO PICK UP STRENGTH, MOSTLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PSI. HE SAID THAT THE PCI HAD TO WORRY ABOUT THE MILLION AND A HALF VOTES THAT HAD BEEN "FLOATING" ON ITS LEFT

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SINCE THE 1972 ELECTIONS, BUT THE DC HAD TO BE CONCERNED BY EROSIONS ON ITS RIGHT TO THE MSI AND DN

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WHO WOULD CAMPAIGN STRONGLY FOR DISGRUNTLED DC VOTES. THE RESULTS, MORO SAID, WOULD THEREFORE NOT LEAD TO ANY CLARIFICATION OF THE POLITICAL IMPASSE. BESIDES FURTHER DECIMATING THE LAY PARTIES, IT WAS TO BE DOUBTED THAT THE DC WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO STRIKE A BETTER BARGAIN WITH THE PCI AFTER ELECTIONS.

5. WITH THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND, MORO OUTLINED

A POSSIBLE NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WHICH HE CLEARLY FAVORS AND BELIEVES CAN BE ACCEPTED BY THE PCI. AFTER THE CRISIS OPENS, THE DC WOULD INITIALLY TRY TO HOLD THE LINE AGAINST ANY MODIFICATION IN THE ABSTENTION FORMULA BY SEEKING TO REVITALIZE THE SIX-PARTY ACCORD. AT SOME POINT, HOWEVER, THE DC WOULD HAVE TO ABANDON THIS INITIAL BARGAINING POSITION BY OFFERING SOMETHING THAT WOULD SATISFY THE PCI'S BASIC NEED FOR A DEMONSTRABLE CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WOULD ENTAIL BRINGING THE PCI INTO THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY. MORO DESCRIBED WHAT HE HAD IN MIND: THE FORMATION OF A DC COALITION WITH THE REPUBLICANS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS FOR WHICH THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS WOULD PROVIDE OUTSIDE SUPPORT ON THE LEFT AND THE LIBERALS OUTSIDE SUPPORT ON THE RIGHT. MORO STRESSED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE FORMULA (TO THE PCI) WOULD
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DEPEND ON CONVINCING THE LIBERALS TO GO ALONG. THE PLI'S FIG-LEAF TO KEEP ALIVE THE SIX-PARTY "CONSTITUTIONAL ARC" CONCEPT WAS HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO THE COMMUNISTS. MORO ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE PSI COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A POSITION DENOTING GREATER SUPPORT OF THE DC THAN THE PCI.

6. I ASKED MORO WHETHER THE SOLUTION HE HAD IN MIND WOULD ALSO ENTAIL THE NOMINATION OF "TECHNICIAN-MINISTERS" AS STAND-INS FOR THE LEFT PARTIES. MORO CLEARLY DOES NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF TECHNICIANS. HE SAID THEY WOULD BE "DEAD-WEIGHTS." NOT BEING POLITICIANS, THEY WOULD BE POLITICALLY WEAK AND MORE RIGIDLY OBEDIENT TO THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES THAN ACTUAL POLITICALLY-AFFILIATED MINISTERS.

7. MORO STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT A SELLING JOB WOULD HAVE TO BE CONDUCTED WITH THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS BEFORE HIS OWN PARTY COULD ACCEPT THE FORMULA HE DESCRIBED. HE DESCRIBED THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS AS "WATCHFUL" AND "HOSTILE" TO ANY FURTHER

COMPROMISE. AS IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVE THE PARTY'S UNITY, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE DC TO PROPOSE SOMETHING THAT WOULD SPLIT THE PARTY. THERE WERE ALREADY "ALARMING SIGNS" OF SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IN THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS. THAT, MORO SAID, WOULD BE A DISASTER.

8. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHEN AND HOW THE
CRISIS MAY BE BROUGHT ABOUT, MORO SAID THAT I NOW
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SEEMED LIKELY THAT THE PCI WILL PULL THE PLUG ON THE
ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT BY VOTING AGAINST THE BUDGET WHEN
IT COMES UP FOR CONSIDERATION AROUND MID-JANUARY.
(COMMENT: ON DEC. 21 PCI DEPUTY WHIP DIGIULIO STRONGLY
SUGGESTED THE PCI WILL VOTE AGAINST THE BUDGET.)
MORO SAID THE GENERAL STRIKE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO
TURN OFF, BUT WOULD BE SUPERFLUOUS. HOW LONG WOULD THE
CRISIS LAST? COMMENTING WRYLY THAT ITALY HAS A HISTROY
OF LONG CRISES, MORO SAID IT COULD WELL REQUIRE TWO
MONTHS TO RESOLVE.

9. I ASKED MORO IF ANDREOTTI'S TATEMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT THE DC
WOULD NOT ACCEPT FULL PCI PARTICIPATION
IN THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A PRIOR RECOURSE TO ELECTIONS, STILL
REFLECTED THE DC'S POSITION. MORO REPLIED THAT HE
THOUGHT IT DID. HE NOTED THAT EVERY DC LEADER, EVEN
DE MITA AS THE MOST "OPEN", HAD FIRMLY REJECTED THE
EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT FORMULA ADVANCED BY THE COMMUNISTS
AND LEFT PARTIES.

10. AT THIS POINT, I REITERATED OUR POSITION ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF MINIMIZING PCI INFLUENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT
TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE. I SAID THAT SHOULD THE PCI'S
ROLE INCREASE, IT WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT
AND UNHAPPY IMPACT ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. MORO
SAID THAT I HAD MADE OUR POSITION VERY CLEAR. I THEN
ASKED MORO WHETHER IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US TO STATE
OUR POSITION PUBLICLY IN STRONGER TERMS. MORO REPLIED
THAT THIS "COIN" SHOULD BE KEPT BACK FOR USE IN CASE
THE DC HAD TO ENGAGE IN ELECTIONS. AT THIS TIME, IT
WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE (BY HARDENING PSI AND PCI
ATTITUDES), AND WOULD ALSO REDUCE THE FLEXIBILITY
NEEDED IN THE CURENT SITUATION. MORO CONCLUDED OUR
FRANK AND DETAILED EXCHANGE BY COMMENTING THAT
UNFORTUNATELY "THE SITUATION IS ONE OF CRUEL SIMPLICITY"
FOR ITS LACK OF ALTERNATIVES. GARDNER
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Message Attributes

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